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ABSTRACT

Recently, the need for increased career guidance and counseling services for high school students has been recognized. A major long-term commitment by school guidance programs must be made to assist students in setting career goals, planning education and work experience around those goals, developing effective work habits and interpersonal skills, and successfully completing their high school program. The Vocational Education Section of the Kansas State Department of Education has been gathering data and funding research activities on Kansas high school students, counselors, and counselor educators in order to determine how to strengthen vocational guidance and counseling. Results from a 1980 study revealed that : (1) secondary school guidance counselors had unclear role definitions; (2) the students, counselors, and counselor educators thought that more time was needed for counselors to be involved in vocational and career guidance activities with individuals and small groups; and (3) counselors wanted state leadership to support their efforts through workshops and technical and financial assistance. Other projects in Kansas involved inservices for counselors, surveys of students to identify their needs, and the use of the Career Planning Program. Through the continued cooperation of the state, counselors, and counselor educators, further progress in assisting students through career guidance appears feasible. An occasional report, "Career Planning for Secondary Students," by C. Henderson, is attached. (NB)

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HIGH TECH HIGH TOUCH: A STATEWIDE APPROACH TO CAREER GUIDANCE

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Kansas State Department of Education

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Position Paper on Vocational Guidance and Counseling in Kansas High Schools

Background

Formal training for counselors had its beginning during the National Defense Fund activities of the 1950's. At that time, persons interested in becoming counselors were trained to identify, through testing, students who had special aptitudes in math, science and foreign language. The major thrust for counseling at that time was to direct students toward college to be educated in those priority areas.

The perceived academic orientation of counselors today appears to be a carryover of that time. Guidance and counseling has gone through many phases as trends in education have changed. Counselors have gone from a strict academic function to providing therapy, behavior modification, identifying students with special needs and finally imparting vocational/career information.

Throughout the past four years, various publics at the state and national level have pointed out the need for increased career guidance and counseling services for high school students. (Conklin, 1980; Kansas Vocational Education Advisory Council, 1979; and American College Testing Program, 1978). The primary goal of vocational/career guidance and counseling, as outlined by these sources, is to assist students with making more effective relevant career/training decisions. At the present time in our economy with employment prospects becoming specialized, it is imperative that students have access to career and labor market information prior to making decisions affecting their future in an occupation.

A major long-term commitment by school guidance programs needs to be made to assist students in setting and refining career goals, planning their education program and work experience around those goals, developing effective work habits and interpersonal skills, and successful completion of their high school program.

Concern

Since career goals are based in part on awareness of a wide range of career opportunities and high school students have a limited awareness of occupations and the world of work, herein lies the problem of adequate vocational guidance and counseling. It continues to be a concern among vocational educators that a high percentage of students enroll in universities instead of short-term technical education, when in fact only a small portion of the available jobs require a college degree. As goals emerge from a structured career decision-making process, many students readily recognize their need for vocational training.

Description of Research Activities (1979 to Present)

The Vocational Education Section of the Kansas State Department of Education, for the past three years, has been gathering data and funding research activities on Kansas high school students, counselors and counselor educators in an effort to establish what is needed to strengthen vocational guidance and counseling in our state. Our goal is to make vocational guidance and counseling a significant part of secondary student support services as a means of providing students with information on training options.

The data gathering began in 1979 with the update of a publication reflecting placement of Kansas high school graduates, enrollment of students in secondary vocational programs, and occupational and industrial distribution of Kansas employment. Preparation of this document confirmed our belief that a very small percentage of Kansas high school graduates were seeking vocational training (five percent as compared to fifty-one percent planning to attend either a community or four-year college). This information was compiled from principals' organizational reports containing student responses during their senior year when counseling was still available. In 1979, a statewide survey was conducted by vocational guidance staff for the purpose of program planning based on student interest in vocational program areas. The survey asked for response to a question on future training plans. The results further exemplified the need for accurate, up-to-date information relative to vocational education to be shared with students. Fifty-two percent of those responding indicated college as their choice for future training. The most disturbing response was the ranking of photography as the number one vocational program interest of those responding. This would certainly lead one to wonder what level of understanding students have of a vocation vs. an avocation.

In 1980, a special project was funded, with federal vocational education funds entitled, "A Study of the Effectiveness of Vocational Counseling at the High School Level in Kansas." The objectives of this study were to determine current methods of vocational counseling, the effectivity of current vocational counseling, how well vocational counseling is accepted by students and the ratio of time spent on vocational counseling vs. other counseling and guidance functions. The population surveyed was high school students, high school counselors (both public and private schools) and counselor educators at all six Regent universities. The outcomes of this study are as follows in brief:

1. Guidance counselors at the secondary level are struggling with role definition, both from their standpoint and that of local administrators. As a result, counselors are spending a great deal of time performing student supervisory and academic duties.

2. Counselors, counselor educators and students are in agreement that more time is needed for the counselors to be involved in guidance activities with individuals and small groups to do more vocational/career counseling. This would make it feasible for more contact to take place while students are in our educational system.

3. Counselors are interested in state leadership to support their efforts in the field through workshops, technical and financial assistance.

During the 1981-82 school year activities were conducted in an effort to begin meeting the needs stressed in previous surveys and studies. Through Vocational Education, in conjunction with the University of Kansas, statewide inservice was conducted for high school counselors, based on the stated desire for state leadership in the form of workshops, etc. This was a beginning in showing an interest and understanding of the time and responsibility constraints of high school counselors. The purpose of the inservice was to increase counselors' ability to assist high school students with making more effective and relevant career/training decisions, regardless of their plans upon completion of high school. This activity targeted and reached thirty percent of the high school counselors in the state.

The second activity carried out during fiscal year 1982 was conducted using exemplary funds to utilize an assessment tool in testing sessions that generate an individual student profile of interest, abilities and skills, plans for the future and needs for help. This profile is used in vocational counseling sessions, either individual or group, as a basis for career decision making. This pilot took place through the Northwest Kansas Area Vocational School at Goodland, Kansas, and was administered to high school juniors in thirty-six schools in surrounding counties. During this time, another similar pilot was being conducted by Southeast Kansas Area Vocational School at Columbus, Kansas, with ninth-grade students. Both activities utilized the Career Planning Program model.

In reviewing the responses of counselors and students, it is clear that a large majority of both groups have reacted very favorably to the overall purposes and experiences delivered through the use of the Career Planning Program model. This assessment tool also emphasizes parental involvement. This information is the basis for Vocational Education initiating an effort focused on a sample of a larger portion of the targeted students to determine how effective this instrument will be in urban settings. As a result, a portion of the Vocational Education exemplary funds were used by Wichita State University to take a statewide sample of secondary students to obtain data on the effectiveness of this tool with a diverse group. This was accomplished by inservicing key counselors across the state who, in turn, inserviced high school counselors in their geographic areas. The high school counselors, in turn, were responsible for administering and interpreting the instrument to students in their schools.

In the 1982-1983 Vocational Guidance Project conducted by Wichita State University, the number one need identified by 1,898 representative high school juniors was "to know more about job opportunities in my career interest areas." Seventy-four percent of those students said that they needed assistance "to have counseling about my career plans" with 41 percent saying they needed "medium" to "a lot" of assistance (ACT, 1983).

This project provided 2,307 high school juniors in 44 schools in Kansas with a career planning experience through use of the Career Planning Program (CPP). Data were collected from 1,948 of those students with the Student Needs Assessment Surveys (SNAS). Forty-four participating senior high schools were selected through a cooperative arrangement with 12 area vocational technical school (AVTS) counselors who functioned as technical skills trainers to high school counselors for use of the CPP and SNAS and as test materials liaison persons between Wichita State University (WSU), American College Testing (ACT) and participating high schools.

State reports of CPP and SNAS data indicate a reliable distribution of students by sex, ethnicity, and size of high school. As a result of its representativeness, implications of the state data take on more significance in guidance and counseling and curriculum program planning.

The following indicates the top four of the top ten identified student needs:

- To know more about job opportunities in my career interest areas.
- To get some job experience in my career interest areas.
- To know more about training requirements for jobs I might like.
- To become aware of training offered in my career interest areas.

Conclusions to be drawn from inspection of the complete list of top-ranked needs are that juniors want information about careers, want opportunities to learn about themselves through job training or job experience related to those careers, want more information about financial aid and college information, and want to improve some school related skills.

This project has created a data base of information on high school juniors which can now be used in subsequent years for planning of curriculum change and for guidance program design.

The common response of high school counselors involved in this study was that this experience provided an effective tool for vocational counseling. In brief, it helped juniors start thinking about career planning. High school counselors surveyed further expressed a willingness to participate in such an activity again as well as endorse the use of such an instrument for their colleagues.

Present Status

The emphasis in the Five-Year Vocational Education State Plan, 1983-1987, deals with increased participation in secondary schools as a guidance and counseling priority. In order to accomplish this goal, work is being done throughout the state to encourage school districts to utilize our proposed statewide system for vocational/career guidance and counseling. The Vocational Education Section of this agency supports this concept theoretically and plans to provide financial support.

The system we have devised will allow a school district to select one of three options to enhance the vocational/career component of their guidance and counseling program.

- The first option would be to utilize the Career Planning Program at the junior level districtwide setting up a testing schedule that would best meet district needs.

- The second option would be to utilize the Career Planning Program at the ninth grade level districtwide (tenth grade is possible), once again setting up a schedule for testing that would best meet district needs.

- The third option would be to utilize the funds made available through this system to subscribe to Kansas Careers, the state computerized career information system. This third option would provide the same level of funding as option one. This translates to mean, whatever the cost would be for using the CPP with juniors districtwide, would be the amount allocated for option three, Kansas Careers.

In Conclusion

The challenges for the future exist in the efforts necessary to deliver an increasingly broad variety of quality self and career exploration experiences to Kansas students.

Through the continued joint efforts of the State Department of Education, counselors and counselor educators, further progress toward the goal of assisting students with making more effective, relevant career/training decisions appears to be within reach.

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CAREER PLANNING FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

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November, 1984

Most people spend more waking hours at work than they spend with their families, friends, hobbies or anything else (ACT, 1983).

Given the significant role jobs play in our lives, it makes sense to do everything possible to find out what jobs might be right for us and how to prepare for them. Secondary school counselors have been given the charge of providing students with activities and information aimed at opening their minds to a wide range of career and education possibilities.

Counselors in Kansas schools are in a critical position to affect the lives of students in all grades. The work of those counselors has changed significantly in recent years because of rapid changes in the world of work, the sudden rise of high technology with its impact on present and future occupations, the erratic shifts in world economic conditions with subsequent effect on employment rates, and because of a gradual and steady tightening of the economic picture in education. In sum, counselors must be able to do their jobs better than ever before in order for today's youth to have an advantage in the work world of tomorrow (Collison, 1983). Counselors and others have indicated a need for improved guidance programs and better vocational counseling skills (Conklin, 1980). The *State Plan for Vocational Education* (KSDE, 1984) acknowledges this same need.

In a Vocational Guidance Project conducted by Wichita State University, 1982-1983, the number one need identified by 1,948 representative high school juniors was "to know more about job opportunities in my career interest areas." Seventy-four percent of those students said that they needed assistance "to have counseling about my career plan" (ACT, 1983).

The data in the final report on this project indicates a reliable distribution of students by sex, ethnicity, and size of high school. As a result of its representativeness, implications of the state data take on more significance in guidance and counseling and curriculum program planning.

The following indicates the top four of the top ten identified student needs:

- To know more about job opportunities in my career interest areas.
- To get some job experience in my career interest areas.
- To know more about training requirements for jobs I might like.
- To become aware of training offered in my career interest areas.

Conclusions to be drawn from inspection of the complete list of top-ranked needs are that juniors want information about careers, want opportunities to learn about themselves through job training or job experience related to those careers, want more information about financial aid and college information, and want to improve some school related skills. Please refer to table for complete list of student needs.

Data collected through the Career Planning Program, the Student Needs Assessment Survey and the Student Follow-Up Evaluation Form indicates that students simply want to learn more about themselves and others through processes such as counseling.

The same data indicates that, although similar in composite, students differ by groups. Those differences can be considered when designing guidance and/or educational programs for students. For example, knowing that males and females have expressed different needs--or have responded differentally to the same need--permits guidance program planners to respond in a more appropriate manner than they could without that information. (Collison, 1983).

This project has created a data base of information on high school juniors which can now be used in subsequent years for planning of curriculum change and for guidance program design.

A second vocational project conducted by Wichita State University, 1983-84, was designed in response to the student needs identified in the previous project. The intent was to provide workshops across the state to introduce and train secondary school counselors in the use of Kansas Careers, the Career Planning Program, and the Students Needs Assessment Survey, and to indicate how they could be used to improve the quality of guidance services for students in Kansas.

As a result, for this 1984-85 school year, Vocational Guidance funds have been made available to every secondary school in the state to improve career

planning services for secondary students. There are presently 150 school districts requesting funds for this activity out of 273 eligible school districts. These districts have reported that they will administer the Career Planning Program to 21,724 students with 80,855 secondary, postsecondary and adult students to receive assistance with career decision making through Kansas Careers computerized career/occupational information system.

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The American College Testing Program Career Guidebook, Planning Your Future, 1983.

STUDENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

RANK ORDER OF NEEDS AS IDENTIFIED BY 1,948 11th GRADE KANSAS STUDENTS

Rank	Description
1	Opportunities in career areas
2	Job training requirements
3	Get job experience in my career area
4	Training in career interests
5	Know about financial aid
6	Develop test-taking skills
7	Learn more about college requirements
8	How to earn college credit
9	Improve study skills
10	How to select college major
11	More aware of career interests
12	Explore careers in detail
13	Learn right education program
14	How courses relate to jobs
15	What jobs available locally
16	Talk to people employed
17	Aware of education options after high school
18	Counseling about career plans
19	Counseling about education plans
20	How to handle worrying things
21	Explore how jobs affect life
22	Improve writing skills
23	Increase math skills
24	Develop more confidence in self
25	Learn to read faster
26	Understand test scores better
27	Obtain part-time work
28	Values relate to job plans
29	Learn to spend money wisely
30	Help select right courses
31	How to interview for a job
32	Improve reading comprehension
33	Identify strengths and abilities
34	Develop speaking skills
35	Learn to handle pressure
36	Learn to make decisions
37	Learn to manage time better
38	Understand my consumer rights
39	Tell others how I feel
40	How to apply for a job
41	Learn how to set goals
42	Understand my personal values
43	Become more self-sufficient
44	Learn about marriage and family
45	Know how to stay in shape
46	More out of life through leisure
47	Learn to stay healthy
48	Someone to listen to problems
49	How to participate in government
50	How to work with counselor